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The Booodle Temple

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The Boodle Temple



R. H. VICKERS.

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THE BOODLE TEMPLE.

O, for a Sphinx to guard our Pharaoh's door,
Watchful of eye and ear, by night and day;
Alert to challenge all, behind, before,
Who boldly tread the broad and beaten way
Fronting the open portal's ample spread,
Thronged by a surging crowd, who spurn delay,
With lips compressed, and staring eyeballs red,
And all their stubborn souls by one fierce passion led.

From North they come, with fair and rounded face;
The East's contingent, hungry, spare and wan;
The West pours in an eager, fearless race;
The Southern host bears trace of vaunting gone,
But still undaunted and in friendly guise.
In restless rivalry the crowd moves on,
Nor listens to the taunts and hard replies
Which, flung from quivering lips, in rugged tones arise.

A mingled throng from every clime are they.
Here stalwart Turk accosts the wily Greek,
(Each striving to seize all the crowded way,)
In tones which still of Navarino speak;
Swarthy Sicilian beards the yellow Moor;
Briton and Russ press hard the ebon cheek
Of Senegambia's darkest. Romans here endure
The scowl Sarmatia hurls, from slave's foul fate secure.

The brawny, plaided Scot, the soft Hindoo—
 Japhet and Shem full typified in each—
 Jostle in the crush; the plastic Jew
 Elbows his sternest hater; Erin's speech
 In words which all the garnered ire reveal
 Of centuries' hate, yet cannot wholly reach
 Its full expression, scorns to conceal
 The one ambition's force which Jew and Gentile feel.

Bohemian, Finn and Lapp, a motley crowd,
 Suevi and Norse, and dapper Japanese,
 With mingled breath gesticulate aloud;
 And China's slant-eyed sons with stolid ease,
 Press to the goal, though distant and unseen:
 Stout Magyar, too, and Goth contend with these,
 In strong pursuit of that which aye has been
 Man's cult, and guides his life in every human scene.

To check this ever growing, ceaseless host
 Within a less than savage onslaught, now
 Necessity's decree commands the most
 Stern rule the dread relentless fates allow.
 Arise! O Sphinx! in all thy might appear!
 With terror's eye and ever darkened brow,
 In aspect fierce, inspiring horrid fear,
 To quell this surging mass, which swells from far and near.

Not as thy prototype on Libya's sand,
 With features mild and sadly patient mien;
 But mighty to subdue this lawless band:
 Not silent, but with utterance hot and keen,
 To pierce their ears, and with portentous roar
 To chase the wrangling rabble from the scene
 Which chokes the Pharaoh's ever open door:
 However gorged with gifts, still clamorous for more.

Arise! O Sphinx! with tongues' immortal gift,
 In all the tones of varied human speech,
 Ready to smite with sharp retort and swift,
 In aptest phrase, the native cry of each:
 Not in pedantic form or classic mold
 Which men employ when humbly they beseech
 The rich or officed, but as when men scold
 A base intruder's gall in words both clear and bold.

"*Mach dich hieraus*," in hoarse Teutonic shout.
 "*Otez vous vite*," must swift as light succeed.
 Fling "*Kludte se*," against the rabble rout,
 "*Djao*." "*Idc praed stund*," "*Gant weg*," forth with speed
 Thrust in their ears; "*Yetch pretch*," "*I'a via*," "*Po*,"
 "*Da fol*," "*Tischarce chuk*," nor stay to heed
 Excuses. "*Larga se*," "*Eregj*," "*Pegen exo*,"
 With "*Poga*," "*Gad ut*," "*Be aff now*," smite them high
 and low.

They linger still, "*Fora di qua*" fling out;
 "*Hence la*," "*Karathlan*," "*Be dubh dachee*,"
 "*Chi kue*," "*Tattin*," in fiercer shout;
 "*Gubh a mach*," "*Jdi ven*," "*Dete yuke*,"
 "*Mach lath*," "*Yete vinni*," with gesture bold,
 "*Gad rack*," "*Inkhala*," "*Dur bash*," "*Inshi*;"
 High amid all the cacophonious scold
 In one strong cry, "Get out," let all thy wrath be told.

With fearless spring repel the onward stride,
 Nor heed the menaced blow. In ancient days
 Importunate crowds by Nilus' muddy tide
 Besieged their Pharaoh. Meek in gait and phrase
 Their Sphinx endured, with gentle prayer and vow,
 Each ruffian stroke and buffet, every phase
 Of ribald wrong; her wounded lips and brow
 In petrified disgrace retain those scars till now.

Beware! be strong! The temple's portals near
 Entice the reeking rabble to its halls,
 Where rapt imagination pictures clear
 Thousand delights in pillar, dome and walls,
 Clothing the scene with colors fixed and gay.
 The truth no gazing worshiper appals.
 He sees in fancy a divine array,
 Splendid in gorgeous forms and clothed in endless day.

Three times revolving, earth surrounds the sun
 With shadowed path; three times the circling year
 In mingled light and shade its goal hath won;
 And all these lengthened days and nights appear,
 Peaceful and blessed, around those portals strong.
 Listless the Sphinx may droop in peace; now here
 Some casual foot awakes the echoes long,
 Silent the vacant halls, dispersed the fervid throng.

But when its fourth course Sol's resplendent car
 Begins to trace, there is a restless sign
 Of gathering thousands hastening from afar,
 By thirst and hunger led, to seek divine
 Cousoling joys beneath great Boodle's dome;
 Where universal hopes and griefs combine
 To fix the seat of that mysterious Om,
 The sacred fount of life; saints' beatific home.

Without, surpassing fair the stories rise;
 Nude caryatid, arch and architrave;
 While dome on dome ascending to the skies,
 O'ertop the polished columns. Banners wave
 To every breeze. O'er all the sheen of gold
 Thrills to the core all throbbing hearts that crave
 That strange seductive treasure which of old
 Enslaves, entrances all who sigh as they behold.

Within, mysterious shadows' gloomy frown
 Alternate mingles with a fitful gleam
 Springing from deep recesses; strange lights crown
 Column and arch, whose brightened angles seem
 Stretched into vistas; niche and terrace rise
 Tier upon tier, which fancy well may deem
 An infinite succession; still the gloom defies
 Investigation; all appears a glory to the eyes.

Beneath, a reeking bed of gathered mire
 Fouled with the special dirt of every clime,
 Unheeded in the one consuming fire
 Of frenzied devotees. A thickening slime
 Gathers on wall and arch, from noisome breath
 Of vomit-nicotine. The vault sublime
 Smeared with the sooty mass of pendent death.
 Dinned by the thunder cries, none heeds what other saith.

Within a deep enclosure, raised on high,
 Shrouded in gloom, the great god Boodle views
 The fetid crowd; by moving limb and eye
 Tokening perennial interest lest he lose
 One smallest portion of the scene below;
 With outstretched hand, disdaining to refuse
 A single prayer, the rapture to forego
 Of benisons on all who worship, high and low.

Sudden, the gazing multitude is hushed;
 Silence profound imports some portent near;
 Only is heard the anguished heart throb crushed
 By pained suspense; now strained both eye and ear
 To be the swiftest first to hear or see
 Or seen or heard, or with the first appear.
 Flash! On the god's stretched palm gleam brilliantly
 Mysterious magic signs:—O. F. F. I. C. E.

Then awe, a shortening breath,—a sigh, a groan
 Swells in a gasping sound through all the space;
 Resounds each vault and isle; the anguished tone
 Recalls to ear the fabled torment place.
 Then gathered all into a mighty roar,
 Torture and hate emblazoned on each face,—
 Shouts the fierce crowd, low bending to the floor,
 “Ave! Great Boodle. see thy faithful saints adore.”

Soon as each burdened heart itself recalls,
 Heeds its own greed or grief and travail long,
 Low in the dirt each boodle zealot falls
 In posture abject; supplication strong
 Pours in a passionate tone, with piteous cry,
 Aside, again, with more of craft or wrong
 Prepenes, are those the multitude espy
 Ogling askance to catch great Boodle’s separate eye.

Again the procession forms; in close array
 And long drawn ranks in solemn march and slow
 The zealous votaries face in dire dismay
 The dismal waiting, waiting, ere they go
 Forward with draggled steps to Boodle’s throne;
 To press with reverent lips the proffered toe
 Smeared with unnumbered kisses like their own,
 And swoll’n like Peruvian rocks with cumulate slime un-
 known.

Only the faithful worshipers who pass
 The osculation ordeal, and abjure
 All nobleness are gathered from the mass
 For further sacrifice. Thus more pure
 In baseness, all unmingled they proceed
 Further in Boodle mysteries, and secure
 More light and skill in that seducing creed
 Which builds on Boodle’s shrine the throne of lawless greed.

But hush! A wondrous light at once illumines
 The god and all the worshipers below;
 Each heart a more than former hope assumes
 Bidden profounder mysteries to know;
 The great god's inner magic stands revealed.
 The charms within more clear and beauteous grow;
 The sweet delights which ever have appealed
 To votaries apt and tried, from others all concealed.

The secret workings of that magic brain
 Swept by electric ripples swift as light,
 By wavelets crossed which speed in constant train
 In myriad current eddies which unite
 In slender films that gather as they go;
 Cohering only in a touch as slight
 As of the sparkling particles which flow
 Along the lightning's flash when at its brightest glow.

And as they form in each directed line,
 Moved by the flush that governs all their way,
 In forms of slender thread at length combine
 To bear to outer world the magnet play
 Which spreads the spirit charm of mind's control.
 All in material atom's swift array
 Tokening a living thought which forms the whole,
 Of mold unique perchance: great Boodle's only soul.

Seen, too, the mingled avenues which lead
 Inward through slender nerve of eye and hand
 And ear and tongue, by atom force decreed
 To bear impressions' tenderest command
 In currents sentient to the centering brain;
 There re-diffused, transformed, united and
 Fashioned anew in reason's marshaled train
 Speed forth the messengers of happiness or pain.

More wondrous far, each nervic thread that bears

Outward the god's decrees expands in light,
Shaping in word or sign the precious wares

Reserved for his elect; each token bright
Points to the place where plenteous treasure lies:

Diamonds, and silk, and spice, the long-sought site
Of cruder gold, the traffic hoard which flies
From untaught touch; here each his own heart's choice
espies.

And as they gaze resplendent on the walls

Thousands of gleaming visions spread to view,
Where light in myriad hue of crystal falls,

Disclosing wide tabernas; ever new
Crowds throng within, and yield large tribute there

To quaff the maddening nectar; lictors true,
Here brawny aldermen, in jewels rare,
Smile on the rich man's gifts, but spurn the beggar's prayer.

Now fades the scene, each picture pales from view,

Leaving the frame and outlines; yet appear
Where each taberna had been, still a few

Smiling attendants. Opens to the view
A pillared hall with cushioned seats around;

And soon through facile doors assemble here
The same bold aldermen with pompous sound;
And shining dollars clink, and hoarse retorts abound.

For here great Boodle's secret chancel; here

The creed is formed, the doctrine argued o'er,
The inspiration drawn with ready ear

From Boodle's whispers. Here alluring store
Of franchise, gift and privilege displayed

Inflames all hearts to higher zeal and more
Devotion. Now in serried ranks arrayed,
Old factions fight and fall, new factions still are made.

By some is shown a white electric beam,
 Brightening each street and alley, bridge and hall,
 Chasing the gloom by strong and steady gleam
 Which erstwhile shrouded footpads, thieves and all
 Their like. In vain, a chorus fierce exclaims:
 "Tis Boodle's light, this villain plan must fall,"
 Then whispering low—"We dare not face the blame
 Of voting 'yes' so soon; we're with you still the same."

Another faction points with well feigned play
 Of deep concern, to crowded street, and throng
 Choking all exit, transit blocked, delay,
 Exposure, mire, expostulation strong;
 Then shouting loud: "We need a freer space,
 An unimpeded means to move along
 An open route, a surer, swifter pace
 To transport anxious crowds, each to his dwelling place."

With deeper guile is filled the answering cry,—
 "Concern for public safety bids us go
 "Cautiously here, wherein we can espy
 "A trace of Boodle. Better to be slow
 "In yielding franchise on monopoly."
 Soft whispering then "Tis safer to vote 'no';
 "Constituents' eyes are watchful, and can see
 "What motives govern 'yes,' however close we be."

Beneath the god's outstretched and sheltering hand
 A special chapel fills a deep recess,
 Screened by a folding curtain. Ready stand
 Attendant priests to welcome all who press
 For privileged admittance, tolling each
 With word and touch restraining all excess,
 For here emblazoned scenes are spread, which teach
 Great Boodle's lessons clear, and all his doctrines preach.

A spacious structure rises; hall and floor
 And rooms unnumbered open to the eye;
 Parlor and vestibule and corridor,
 Pantry and kitchen, well-stocked larder nigh;
 Chapel and lawn, and fuel's ample pile,
 Clothing for work and rest in full supply
 Suggest large outlay and resource, the while
 Inspire the boodle soul with thought of pelf and guile.

And gathered here a strange and varied crowd,
 Dissimilar in action, tone and speech;
 Abnormal all; some mute, some ever loud
 And restless; in the lowering eye of each
 A settled gleam; some wandering listless o'er
 The level sward; again some vainly reach
 To seize the moon or star, or vacant pore
 O'er the full page, but thence can draw but scanty store.

But helpless all to shield their vacant day
 From the strong cunning of a boodle mind.
 Pictured beneath far other scenes display,
 Visions and persons of a different kind.
 For here a banquet spread with flowers and wine
 Tells the disposal of the store designed
 For the mind—crippled; the revelers combine
 To shield each others crimes by vows at Boodle's shrine.

Companion picture;—cots and beds are laid
 In solemn rows, in chambers clean and pure,
 And all in spotless coverings arrayed,
 Enticing health and rest and speedy cure
 To bodies racked by fell disease and pain,
 And loss of limb, forever to endure
 A life dependent, and that dreary strain
 Which fetters all the maimed, for whom few hopes remain.

Here prescient care abundant means supplies
 For ease or pain, for gentle nurture. Here
 Soft hands and hearts with gentle touch and wise,
 Apply such remedies as best appear,
 And coax back strength with generous food and wine,
 The kindly smile, the word that casts out fear,
 The strength-transmitting touch, the strong design
 Transfusing mind's control in law of life combine.

But wine and cheer entice the boodle soul :
 It longs to seize the tender gifts prepared
 For suffering and want; sighs to control
 Their sources. Boodle's votaries ensnared
 To this foul chapel view the scene portrayed
 Of this good cheer and gentle gifts, all shared
 By devotees whose artifice has made
 Their only home and hope within the temple's shade.

On the third side a comely priestess stands,
 Nude to the waist and with uncovered limb,
 Holding a double curtain in her hands,—
 While the full light pours down not soft nor dim--
 Ready for pay to draw the curtain free.
 Here female forms as true as life and slim,
 Reclining, dancing, toying merrily:—
 Beneath, imprinted large, “For those who worship me.”

With joyous smile and wide dilated eye
 And arching neck each bends to view the scene,
 While quickened pulse and half emitted sigh
 Tell the seductive power each siren queen
 And tablet pose enforce upon the soul.
 Slowly the lingering line withdraws, between
 Halting and wavering, 'till at length the whole
 Impassioned crowd is pressed to other priests' control.

Full in the view of those who here retire,
 In open aisle, where all may freely gaze,
 And all imbibe the tenets which inspire
 Great Boodle's minions, and impress his praise
 On every tongue, bright life-size tablets glare.
 The meaning clear, the bold, enticing ways,
 Which proffer wealth to all who seek to know
 How to secure the gifts which from his bounty flow.

The field of springs. A legislative hall ;
 A restless conclave stirred by sharp debate;
 Alternate fiery speech and formal call
 Of names, and cries of 'aye' or 'no,' create
 A sense of pride in freedom's lusty voice;
 The open look, the fearless mien, sedate
 And forceful, laud the pure and public choice
 Of champions for the right, and bid its friends rejoice.

Within the chamber, sternly watching near,
 Sit Boodle's priests, arrayed in vesture gay;
 From them mysterious sentient lines appear
 To reach debater's ears; their mutual play
 Denotes concerted action. Sympathy
 Thrills through these lines as swells the wordy fray.
 Dull exoteric eyes no sign can see:
 From esoteric souls dispelled all mystery.

Arrayed around the jealous priests observe
 Contending reasonings' alternate force,
 And as the argued interests sway and swerve,
 Infuse new life into the struggle's course,
 As Boodle's secret motive may command.
 And they, long deemed a commonwealth's resource
 To fight for right divine, are seen to stand
 Boodle's obedient slaves,—his gifts within their hand.

Widens the scene. These pictures all effaced

A grander dome reveals its towering lines
High o'er a spreading pile, and proudly traced

To crown a nation's capital. Combines
Supremacy with vastness in its spread.

Gathered beneath, the power, the high designs
By countless minor thinkings sourced and fed
That speak a people's mind,—the living and the dead.

Assembled here beneath the ample vault

The thousand plans that guide a nation's way,
Alternate reasonings perplex, exalt,

Then guide into fair wisdom's clearer day.
The purer light of life, the darker shade

Dimming the clearness of the holier way,
Enable subtle promptings to be made
By Boodle's artful priests, all skillful in their trade.

Vast is the area from hence revealed:

The mountain's gold, the treasures of Peru:
Alaska's ice-bound secrets all unsealed,

Forest and ranch and isle exposed to view;
Indies and oceans spread before the eye;

More than the fabled tempter ever knew,
But to the zealous devotee brought nigh,
Who bends to the real devil in these days throned on high.

Here, too, the votaries in rapture view

The larger ducts by which the golden stream
Of Boodle's bounty charms, enriches, too.

Dazed they behold, as if in mystic dream,
Sudden the potent vision's spell hath ceased,

And all with furious voice "To Pharaoh" scream.
"Presiding host of this quadrennial feast,
Distributor of heaven, great Boodle's arch high priest."

Hark! dauntless Sphinx, when sternest duty's call
 Stations the watchful sabkos at the gate.
 Crushing each column strong and patient wall,
 The struggling throng approach their dreaded fate.
 Swift to the portal, quell the swelling din.
 Beyond— not thine the shame—expectant wait
 Attendant priests, of stature gaunt and thin,
 Tolling a *douceur* large ere each may pass within.

Soon in the Pharaoh's presence ranged in line.
 The suppliants assume an aspect new.
 Each meanest devotee at Boodle's shrine.
 Loudest in vaunting, spreads to Pharaoh's view
 Tokens of prowess dark with human gore;
 Boasts of the vanquished enemies he slew;
 Invents red triumphs in dark days of yore,
 The dungeons he endured, the agonies he bore.

Yet even here a mild and patient few
 Stand with a placid eye and brow serene:
 Not vaunting, not disdainful; they review
 In modest phrase each storied combat scene.
 Through recent years in peaceful wisdom's way.
 Not oblivious, not forgiving what hath been:
 Bearing their manly homage fresh to-day.
 Discerning Pharaoh smiles on this elect array.

Sadly the crestfall'n crowd retires, and each
 Decries blind Boodle's impotence in tears;
 Abjures the hated god in florid speech;
 Vows to renounce him in the coming years;
 High pride all humbled and close coffer void.
 Yet when the next quadrennial feast appears,
 Still in their patient ecstasy employed,
 To Boodle's fetid shrine all blindly are decoyed.

Such is the fervid cult of modern days,
 Embracing countless millions in its creed.
The sycophantic knee, the servile phrase,
 The pæans hymned, the devotees who bleed;
The pilgrim throng that speed from every shore:
 The idol formed from every human greed,
Exhaling steam of sin from every pore:—
Unpurchaseable Sphinx, guard thou our Pharaoh's door.

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